

## 114<sup>th</sup> Congress: A Month in Review

*We're just four weeks into the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress and the Republican Majority is already off to a rough start. Since this Congress convened, every week has been characterized by divisive votes and dysfunction within the House Republican conference. Republican Congressman Charlie Dent from Pennsylvania summarized the tumultuous first month best:*

**Rep. Charlie Dent (R-PA):** *"Week one, we had a speaker election that did not go as well as a lot of us would have liked. Week two, we got into a big fight over deporting children, something that a lot of us didn't want to have a discussion about. Week three, we are now talking about rape and incest and reportable rapes and incest for minors. ... I just can't wait for week four."* [National Journal, [1/21/15](#)]

### Speaking of week four, here's what's happened this week...

*This week, House Republicans continued their record of partisanship by planning to bring an extreme bill to the Floor that would militarize our southwestern border, deny Homeland Security officials the flexibility required to address existing and new challenges along that border, and do nothing to improve security in other border areas. However, Republican leaders had to pull this bill from consideration on Monday afternoon after their most conservative Members began voicing opposition because it didn't go far enough:*

*"House Republicans have weathered three tough weeks to start the 114th Congress, and this week won't be any easier, as GOP leaders try to tamp down conservative opposition to a border security bill meant to be the core of the party's immigration reform plan... Republican leaders are billing the legislation—which Homeland Security Committee Chairman Mike McCaul called the 'toughest border security bill ever'—as the gateway to their long-promised, step-by-step immigration rewrite. But Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson called it 'extreme to the point of being unworkable,' meaning Democratic support will be hard to come by, and that may confront Republicans with a dilemma in which they don't have enough votes in their own party to pass it."* [National Journal, [1/25/15](#)]

*"Now Mr. Sessions's opposition to a House border-security bill scheduled for a vote this week will spotlight, and test, his efforts to rally conservatives to his side. The measure was one of the few changes to the immigration system where Republicans had been expected to agree, and Mr. Sessions's efforts are prompting criticism from backers of the House bill... 'For God's sake, if we can't unite around border security, what can we unite around?' said Michael McCaul (R., Texas), chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security."* [WSJ, [1/25/15](#)]

*"The dispute underscores how difficult it will be for the new, Republican-led Congress to shape immigration policy when Republicans cannot agree among themselves — let alone with Democrats — on how to achieve their main goal of securing the U.S.-Mexican border."* [USA Today, [1/21/15](#)]

**The rest of January wasn't any easier for Republicans, who took control of both chambers earlier this month. Here's a review of their first three weeks in the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress:**

### Week One

*House Republicans began the first week of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress with a divisive vote to re-elect Speaker Boehner. The revolt illustrated the deep divisions within the party:*

*"After the election of John A. Boehner to a third term as speaker Tuesday, House Republicans start the 114th Congress in a similar fashion to the 113th: Conservatives are unhappy with leadership and leadership's not too pleased with some conservatives... But in a strong statement of protest, 25 Republicans voted for someone else or voted present... The 25 Boehner rebels — a mix of familiar conservative foes, some GOP freshmen and a few Republicans who typically vote with Boehner but broke rank on the speaker vote — sent a message to Boehner and Republicans in general that the conference is not unified..."* [Roll Call, [1/6/15](#)]

*"Rank-and-file Republicans are fuming at what they see as the heavy-handed tactics of Republican leaders, one day after a divisive vote that narrowly handed Speaker John Boehner the gavel for another term."*

*Office of Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer, 01/27/15*

Members who opposed Boehner on the floor are frustrated that two rebels have already been stripped of committee assignments, while the speaker's allies, angered by an embarrassingly close vote that played out on national television, warn darkly of more punishment to come. And some conservatives who backed Boehner complain that they are now facing a different kind of retribution—from the Right.” [National Journal, [1/7/15](#)]

### **Week Two**

*In the second week of the 114<sup>th</sup> Congress, House Republicans put our national security at risk by attaching draconian, anti-immigrant amendments to a bill to fund the Department of Homeland Security past February. Several Republican Senators voiced opposition to this partisan approach that put DHS funding at risk and over two dozen House Republicans bucked their party's attempts to deport DREAMers:*

“A Republican amendment that could leave hundreds of thousands of young immigrants open to deportations is running into stiff opposition in the House – a rare show of rank-and-file rebellion over the leadership’s catering to the right. The measure – which would kill the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program – is scheduled to come to the House floor Wednesday as part of a bill to fund the Department of Homeland Security through the end of September. But more than a dozen House Republicans have told the GOP whip operation that they will not vote for the amendment, according to people involved. These Republicans say the leadership is catering to the far-right elements of the party, and they disapprove of the underlying policy.” [Politico, [1/13/15](#)]

“Sen. Lindsay Graham warned his GOP colleagues against connecting funding for the Department of Homeland Security with an effort to undermine President Barack Obama's immigration overhaul... ‘To my Republican colleagues, we're playing with fire here. We need a robust homeland security budget now,’ the South Carolina Republican said...” [CNN, [1/12/15](#)]

“‘The Republican strategy is all about undoing what the president has done, not doing anything proactively. The message the Latino community is receiving is one of pettiness — they’re just hearing that Republicans want to treat them all as illegals,’ said Alfonso Aguilar, a former Bush administration official. “It’s not good policy, and politically, it sends a terrible message.” [The Hill, [1/12/15](#)]

### **Week Three**

*Last week, House Republicans introduced a bill to roll back women’s health care rights. After some of their women Members raised concerns that the partisan legislation would alienate young people and women, House Republican leaders pulled from consideration, only to replace it with another extreme bill:*

“Bowling to the wishes of several moderates and women members, House Republican leaders pulled a controversial antiabortion bill from consideration late Wednesday night... Some Republicans worried that the 20-week abortion measure might alienate millennials and female voters. But many female lawmakers were also furious over its clause stating that women can be exempt from the ban in cases of rape only if they reported the rape to authorities... In the last week a new issue caused trouble for leadership: Nearly every woman in the conference was opposed to the way the abortion bill was brought forth.” [National Journal, [1/21/15](#)]

“House Republican leadership is planning to move forward with a bill banning abortions after 20 weeks, despite opposition from female lawmakers who fear the legislation is too harsh and could turn off young voters... [Rep.] Ellmers [(R-AZ)] and Rep. Jackie Walorski (R-Ind.) removed their names from the bill on Tuesday. Ellmers is further whipping her female colleagues against the bill... The disagreement between Republican women and the leadership is a setback for the party, which is trying to avoid internal conflict.” [Politico, [1/20/15](#)]

*It hasn’t been a great start for House Republicans, and it’s been even worse for the American people, who want to see Congress pursue bipartisan solutions that address the challenges they face.*